

United States Congressman Paul Hodes visits the New Hampshire Veterans Home

TILTON, NH - United States Congressman Paul Hodes visited the New Hampshire Veterans Home (NHVH) in Tilton, NH on April 6 and attended the Friday morning Coffee Social with Residents and staff. He said, "I want to express my thanks to those who served our country and to those of you who care for our veterans. I am so proud of what you are doing. It is a privilege to have the New Hampshire Veterans Home in my district."

Hodes remarked that before becoming a Congressman he had never been inside the Capitol building. He was inspired by the marble steps, "worn down by thousands of passing feet" and "the incredible sight of the Capitol dome at night." He added, "It is an awe-inspiring experience to serve in Congress, especially during these historic times."

Hodes is drafting a bill which will create an Office of Ombudsman Affairs for Veterans, which he hopes will be a central resource for veterans and their families to receive all services. He said, "It is absolutely imperative that we make a commitment to support our troops when they are on active duty and when they come home."

He reflected on the excellent emergency care our troops are receiving in the field and the great need for improvements to medical facilities here at home. "We are saving lives that in earlier times we would have lost," he remarked, "but our medical system here has been overwhelmed. We've not been able to keep up with the demand—not just at Walter Reed but at many other facilities that serve our wounded warriors."

NHVH Commandant Barry Conway welcomed Congressman Hodes, who enjoyed listening to updates from the staff and residents at the Veterans Home. Anne Howe, RNC, Director of Resident Care Services, talked about how the NH Veterans Home was one of four New Hampshire nursing homes to receive the Quality of Life Award. Tom Heald, Tarrs Program Manager, talked about the NHVH Intergenerational Program, which brings children to the Veterans Home to enjoy reading and special events with the veterans. Heald said, "The children are learning about aging in a very positive way. Imagine a teenager playing volleyball with a 93 year old resident who covers the net like nobody's business!"

Hodes also congratulated Resident Council President and World War II veteran and former Plymouth NH resident Charlie Safford, who just won the 2007 Judith D. Griffin Advocacy Award winner. The award, created by the New Hampshire Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman Advisory Board, is presented annually to recognize persons who have made outstanding contributions to enhancing the quality of care, quality of life, and the enhancement of the rights of residents of long-term care facilities.

Donna Lamprey, Housekeeping Supervisor, told the Congressman about the NHVH's "Veterans Helping Veterans" program which involves residents in writing letters, sending homemade cards, and mailing packages to our troops overseas. Lamprey explained that residents and staff are involved in selling yellow ribbons to raise money for the effort. She added, "I've worked here for over 20 years and I can't think of anything I'd rather do."

Beth Benz, Recreational Therapist, told the Congressman about two upcoming special events—a concert with country singer Jackie Cox, and a performance by Re-Creation, a group of talented young performers who travel the country entertaining veterans.

David Clark, a Vietnam-era veteran and member of the NHVH's Writers' Group, talked about how helpful the writing program had been for him and how much the group enjoyed writing letters to other service people.

Commandant Barry Conway was pleased that the Congressman was able to visit the Veterans Home. "Nothing is more powerful than hearing from our residents and staff," he said. "It's great to have the opportunity to meet with our elected representatives—to share our accomplishments as well as our concerns."



NHVH Commandant Barry Conway with Resident David Clark and US Congressman Paul Hodes